



U.S. Department of Justice

Ronald C. Machen Jr.
*United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center
555 Fourth St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530*

PRESS RELEASE

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For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

(202) 252-6933

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District Man Pleads Guilty to Sex Trafficking of Children and Transporting a Child for the Purpose of Prostitution -Co-Defendant Pleads Guilty to Tampering With Evidence -

WASHINGTON – Robert Brathwaite, 37, of Washington, D.C., pled guilty today to federal charges of sex trafficking of children, transportation of a minor for the purpose of prostitution, and possession of a firearm, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., James W. McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, and Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

A co-defendant, Tavia Crudup, 23, of Suitland, Md., pled guilty today to tampering with evidence and obstructing the sex trafficking prosecution.

Both defendants appeared this afternoon before the Honorable John D. Bates in the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia. If the plea agreements are accepted by the Court, Brathwaite faces a prison term of 10 years and Crudup faces 12 months of incarceration. The sentencing proceedings are scheduled for December 21, 2011.

According to evidence presented at the plea today, Brathwaite first encountered the victim, a 14-year-old girl, in May 2011. The victim, who had run away from her home in another state, was living in an apartment in the District of Columbia.

Brathwaite, also known as "Smoke," transported the victim to various places in the District and Maryland to prostitute for him. Crudup, a prostitute who identified herself as "Rain" or "Cupcake," schooled the teenager about how much money to charge for sex and how to conduct herself as a prostitute. She assisted Brathwaite in transporting the victim.

On May 31, 2011, the victim was picked up by the Metropolitan Police Department for truancy. An investigation then led police to Brathwaite, who was located, along with Crudup in a Lexus sport utility vehicle. Law enforcement officers later executed a search warrant and found a fully loaded semi-automatic firearm in the vehicle. Brathwaite was arrested.

In the weeks that followed, Crudup destroyed evidence and talked with Brathwaite about ways to obstruct evidence in the case. Among other things, she instructed another person to throw away the victim's clothes. Crudup subsequently was charged for her role in the case.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood and the Regional Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. In February 2006, the Attorney General created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorney's Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.

In announcing today's plea, U.S. Attorney Machen, Assistant Director McJunkin and Chief Lanier commended the outstanding investigative work performed by a team of MPD detectives and Special Agents and an analyst from the FBI's Washington Field Office. In addition, they cited the extraordinary work by Seventh District Truancy Officers Michael Tynes and Tamara Watkins and Seventh District Patrol Officers Michael Bryant and Stefeni Thomas.

They also praised the efforts of those who handled the case for the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Forensic Examiner John Marsh, Victim Witness Advocate Veronica Vaughn, Legal Assistant Charmonique Price, Paralegals Cynthia Muhammad and Lamine Hendrix, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Erin Andrews. Finally, they praised the efforts of Assistant U.S. Attorneys Julieanne Himmelstein and David Kent, who are prosecuting the case.

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